

2 Questions on SALT

By Arthur B. Krim

To those millions of Americans to whom evaluation of the strategic-arms treaty has become lost in technicalities and conflicting generalities, I suggest that you ask your Senators two basic questions. You will be amazed by the extent to which the answers will cut through to the bottom line, not only for yourself, but also for your Senators as they approach their own moment of truth in making one of the most crucial decisions in our country's life.

1: Which of your objections to the terms of SALT II would be satisfied or alleviated by a repudiation of the treaty?

The fact is that the principal arguments against the treaty would actually in most instances be exacerbated if the treaty were not to be ratified.

As an example, take the argument that the treaty allows the Soviet Union the unfair advantage of the 308 heavy missiles now in place. If there were no treaty, this limit would be lifted; even more, the Soviet Union could then arm each of these missiles with up to 30 warheads, instead of the limit of 10 provided by the treaty, an overall potential increase of 6,000 warheads or more, which would otherwise be prohibited under SALT II.

Or take the argument that the Soviet Backfire bomber is not counted within the treaty ceiling. If there were no treaty, the Soviet Union could increase the range of the Backfire and its production rate without limits. Instead, in assurances that are integral to the treaty, the Soviet Union has specifically agreed to restrict the capacity of the Backfire to less than intercontinental range and to limit its production to no more than 30 a year.

Or, take the argument that compliance with the terms of the treaty is not adequately verifiable. If there were no treaty, we would be required to rely entirely on our ability to penetrate what is happening in a closed society in order to know what missiles the Russians were testing or deploying. Instead, under the treaty the Soviet Union is required to take affirmative steps to aid us in monitoring these same developments.

Or, take the argument that our Minutemen missiles will be vulnerable in the early 1980's. No one can argue that this is in any way due to, or caused by, the terms of SALT II. However, any steps to counteract this vulnerability are made much simpler by knowledge under SALT II that the threat to be counteracted comes from a limited and known number of Soviet missiles.

You may be surprised to find that your Senator, if he is opposed to the treaty, may not be able to point to a single substantive objection that would be remedied to any extent by a defeat of ratification.

2: What do you propose be done to enhance our security that cannot be done under SALT II?

The fact is that whatever is being credibly proposed to improve our security or the security of our allies involves questions for broad national debate that are not inhibited by SALT II. Should we deploy the MX missile and, if so, how? Should we enlarge our nuclear forces in the European theater?

You may again be surprised to find that our choices on these and the other important issues of security remain the same, SALT II or not. The difference is that under SALT II we can make these choices with greater certainty of the extent of the strategic forces deployed against us.

The argument that SALT II should not be ratified unless and until these choices are made, even though they are unrelated to any SALT II restrictions, in effect says that one-third instead of a majority of our Senators should control our defense decisions.

These two questions recognize that your Senator's decision cannot turn on what an ideal treaty might be but on whether we are better off under the terms of this treaty or by opting for the foreseeable future to go our own way without restraints on either side. If you insist on satisfactory answers, the bottom line becomes clear.

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